

SOMETHING ABOUT TEACHING MUSIC.

BY AN UNMUSICAL STUDENT.

There is in my mind a strong desire to rectify or transmute certain misunderstandings that may have arisen through my conduct, misuse or abuse of a certain form of musical training that has been presented to me.

Through a misrepresentation of the same I forced myself to speak strongly against that which I did not properly understand, and, as I feel sure that many of my fellow-students—at least some of those who may be termed “the less musical ones”—have likewise been wrongly impressed, I should like to reinstate them.

I write, not *only* concerning the *method* of musical teaching which has been so misused, but for the sake of teachers who have been properly instructed in that method, as well as “for the children’s sake,” in whose hands we leave our nation’s musical welfare.

What place do we, as a nation, hold in the musical world? What place have we ever held? Where are our musicians? If we answer these questions honestly, do we not feel a kind of shame, and do we not burn to do better!

I hear around me mothers asking for a something better than the usual musical instruction which, in its unsuitability to the intelligence and ability of the young child, is generally put forth as the only way of teaching music . . . a manner which is generally without line, without rule, without sense. I do not feel I can answer their debates; I do not feel I can put into their hands any particular book to work from;—of what use is a book without intelligence (excuse the word); I mean unless it is read and used intelligently, and with common sense.

To teach music—what is music? how can it be taught? “I wish my child to be taught music,” or to “learn music,” you are the more often told; and you find—

- (a) That the child can strum *tunes* with straight, stiff fingers, regardless of speed, and all in one tone like a monotonous reader;
- (b) Or it can play a simple tune after you “by ear.” Thus the average child of ten is presented to you.
- (c) A third case: the “so-called” *musical* child of musical parents with musical relations.

But I do not intend to write about “the child” but about “the teacher.” How can he (or she) impart without he knows? How can he know without learning? He *cannot* demonstrate without doing,—and how can he do “*that which he has never done himself?*”

Thy limbs grow stiff through long misuse;
Thy eyes not seeing cannot see;
Thy hearing’s dull because abuse
Has long allowed it little use—
How can thy senses trained be?

These are psychological facts—these are our physical defects. Ruminant—reason on these things; try to use your members as you have never used them before,—what is the result? A feeling of hopelessness cannot but arise from this consideration of theory and practice, and the mountain seems insurmountable—the task of teaching music—hopeless.

But no, it is not hopeless; the door is not quite shut—a ray of light shines through the aperture. We must learn to reason more precisely, to think more deeply, and to consider more thoroughly than heretofore the wonderful task before us. Let us therefore arm ourselves with humility, faith, and simplicity, so that we may investigate the matter, and learn *from the beginning* that which we wish to teach. We must drill our fingers, our hands and our wrists, and we must try to *make clear* that which was misty or unexplained to us as children, and so fill in the gaps which were left in our own musical education.

May I recommend to all who teach music to children
“The Teacher’s Guide to Mrs. Curwen’s Pianoforte Method”

(tenth edition), published by J. Curwen & Sons, Limited, 24, Berners Street, London, W. (Grade I. and Grade II., price 1s. 10½d. each); and Ward Jackson's "Gymnastics for the Fingers and Wrist," published by Metzler & Co., Limited, Great Marlborough Street, London, price 2s.

[NOTE.—If you are going to teach a beginner how to use the pianoforte you will find that Mrs. Curwen's Teachers' Guide (Grade I.) will suffice for several lessons, perhaps a term's work, before you need "The Child's First Book," Grade I. Step I.]

Please bear in mind the great necessity of training the hand "*before*" it touches the piano, and the advisability of training the ear to distinguish sounds of different pitch, differences of time, and duration.

HANDICRAFT NOTES.

I think many of the ex-students may be glad to know how to make the strong paste which we use a great deal both in the Sloyd and Book-binding at the College. If a good quantity is to be made, I find it best to mix the flour and cold water to the consistency of a very thick cream *the night before* the paste is boiled, as then the lumps, if present at all, are very easily and thoroughly smoothed out. I always add glue—about a desert-spoonful of powdered glue (melted down in a little hot water) would be the quantity to be added to a large cupful of paste. Stir the flour and water continually one way in the pan, and when warm add the liquid glue, and stir till the whole thickens. When cold, a half-teaspoonful of salicylic acid stirred in will make the paste keep for several weeks if the pot in which it is put is kept *covered*.

I am so often asked to give addresses where materials can be procured, that I add the following, feeling sure that some may like to have them:—

For squared carton paper (8in. by 8in.): Messrs. Arnold and Sons, Butterley Street, Hunslet Lane, Leeds.

Making up of Brass Repoussé: Mr. Benson, Blue Hills, Ambleside.

Book-binding Linen in any colour (1/8 per sq. yd.): Percy Lunn and Humphreys, Bradford, Yorkshire.

Thurms, &c., for Smyrna Rug-work (1/2 per lb.): Miss M. Herbert, 81, High Street, Bridgnorth, Salop.

Making up Leather-work, also Leather in the piece: Mr. George Boorer, Abinger Cottage, Oak Hill, Reigate, Surrey.

Tools and designs for Wood-carving and Chip-carving: Messrs. Harger, New Street, Settle, Yorkshire.

For Steel Angles, &c., for Sloyd: Bean and Son, 149, Briggate, Leeds.

Cardboards, &c., for Sloyd and Book-binding: Messrs. Berry and Roberts, 41, St. Bride Street, Ludgate Circus, E.C.

Stuffing for Leather-work: Miss J. Backhouse, Church Cottage, Brathay, near Ambleside.

Hoping these particulars will be of use,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

C. F. BARNETT.